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Justice and security for women in peace reconciliation

Committee Opinion¹

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Rapporteur: Ms Boriana ÅBERG, Sweden, Group of the European People's Party

A. Conclusions of the Committee

1. The Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy congratulates the rapporteur of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, Ms Yevheniia Kravchuk (Ukraine, ALDE), on her report, which makes a strong case for strengthening women's role in all stages of conflict resolution and peace building.
2. The committee agrees with the report's findings and analysis which are consistent with its own work relating to the prevention and settlement of crisis and conflicts and supports the proposed draft resolution. The committee proposes five amendments to the draft resolution with a view to strengthening its message.

B. Proposed amendments to the draft resolution

Amendment A (to the draft resolution)

In paragraph 5, at the end of the first sentence, add the following words:

“, in line with the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security.”

Amendment B (to the draft resolution)

In paragraph 7, after the words “With respect to women's role in peace and security policy and action,”, insert the following words:

“the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to fully implement Resolution 1325 and the other United Nations “Women, Peace and Security” resolutions, often termed as the “Women, Peace and Security agenda”. In particular,”

Amendment C (to the draft resolution)

At the beginning of paragraph 8.2, insert the following words:

“take measures to promote the recruitment of women to the armed forces and”

1. Reference to committee: [Doc.15045](#), Reference 4497 of 6 March 2020. Reporting committee: Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination. See [Doc. 15525](#). Opinion approved by the committee on 17 May 2022.



Amendment D (to the draft resolution)

After paragraph 8.5, insert the following paragraph:

“include teaching on the gender dimension in all stages of military training and make sure that both women and men teach in military academies.”

Amendment E (to the draft resolution)

Before paragraph 12, insert the following paragraph:

“Stressing that quality education, notably with regard to citizenship, conflict transformation and human rights, is essential for developing peaceful societies, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to include democratic citizenship and peace education into the formal school curriculum from an early age.”

C. Explanatory memorandum by Ms Boriana Åberg, rapporteur for opinion

1. Introduction

1. I would like to congratulate Ms Yevheniia Kravchuk (Ukraine, ALDE) for her report on “Justice and security for women in peace reconciliation” on behalf of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination. I would like to pay special tribute to her commitment to see this work through to the end despite the Russian Federation’s ongoing aggression against her country, Ukraine, which must have generated substantial difficulties for carrying out her task.

2. As a Ukrainian woman parliamentarian, Ms Kravchuk found herself finalising a report which stresses that women and girls are among the first casualties of war, notably as victims of conflict-related sexual violence, at a time when a growing body of evidence collected by international bodies and non-governmental observers show that Russian armed forces may have committed serious violations of international humanitarian law including, rape and sexual violence, and 90% of the refugees resulting from the conflict are women and children.

3. However, Ms Kravchuk is well placed to know that during war, women are not only victims but also key actors at the political, military and humanitarian forefront. As rightly put in the draft resolution, the Ukrainian women parliamentarians have shown during the ongoing war that they can capture the world’s attention to the unfolding drama and act tirelessly to put an end to the conflict, while reflecting on how legislation and policies will contribute to peace and reconciliation after the war.

2. Women’s critical role in peace processes

4. The statistical data provided on women’s participation in major peace processes worldwide (paragraph 4 of the draft resolution) shows that women are often absent from the negotiating table during peace talks. This is not only unrealistic and even surreal – as pointed out in the draft resolution – but also ineffective. In fact, women’s participation in peace processes is critical.

5. A 2015 study on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security found that women’s participation increases by 35% the probability of a peace agreement lasting 15 years. According to the same study, analysis of 40 peace processes since the end of the Cold War shows that, in cases where women were able to exercise a strong influence on the negotiation process, there was a much higher chance that an agreement would be reached than when women’s groups exercised weak or no influence. In cases of strong influence of women an agreement was almost always reached.²

6. Women must be included in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts to ensure that their interests and lived experiences are fully reflected in peace processes, and equally considered in recovery efforts in the aftermath of conflicts.³ In its relevant resolutions relating to the prevention and

2. “Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing The Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325”, UN Women, 2015.

settlement of crisis and conflicts, the Assembly stressed the need to include women in different modalities of reconciliation efforts with a view to a durable political settlement and has consistently referred to the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security in this context.⁴

7. The UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) reaffirms the important role of women in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, peace negotiations, peace building, peacekeeping, humanitarian response and in post-conflict reconstruction and stresses the importance of their equal participation and full involvement in all efforts for the maintenance and promotion of peace and security. It urges all actors to increase the participation of women and incorporate gender perspectives in all United Nations peace and security efforts. It also calls on all parties to conflict to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. Resolution 1325 (2000) was followed by six related resolutions: Resolutions 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), 1960 (2010), 2106 (2013) and 2122 (2013). Implementation of these resolutions is often termed the “women, peace and security agenda” (WPS agenda).

8. With a view to strengthening the draft resolution’s message on the need for the Assembly to put justice and security for women at the top of the list of priorities for global action, and for women to be empowered to act in all stages of conflict resolution and peace building (paragraph 5), I propose to add a reference to the UN the Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) which is a landmark instrument. Similarly, I think it would reinforce the draft resolution’s message to recall that the implementation of Resolution 1325 (2000) and WPS agenda falls in the first place on member States. These two amendments would also facilitate the reading of the subsequent operative paragraphs where the UN Security Council Resolution and WPS agenda are referred to (Amendments A and B).

9. In accordance with its terms of reference, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy will continue to work on the prevention of conflicts and the creation of conditions for their peaceful and durable settlement. The upcoming committee report entitled “The role of the Council of Europe in preventing human suffering resulting from international armed conflicts: different stages of conflict prevention and best practices to be employed” will be an opportunity to develop women’s involvement in conflict prevention.

3. Women in the armed forces

10. I was a member of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination when the report on “Women in the armed forces: promoting equality, putting an end to gender-based violence” was under preparation. Two issues that got my attention at the time are particularly relevant for Ms Kravchuk’s report: the importance of promoting the recruitment of women to the armed forces as well as promoting their careers in the military,⁵ and that of creating a climate conducive to gender equality within the armed forces, *inter alia*, by making sure that both women and men teach in military academies. Measures aimed at achieving these objectives can only but increase women’s participation at the negotiation table on an equal footing with their male counterparts and should therefore be encouraged (Amendments C and D).

4. No peace without justice

11. Justice is an indispensable ingredient in the process of reconciliation for the victims, communities and countries concerned and is essential to resolutely fight impunity, which is unacceptable.⁶ The report stresses the importance of transitional justice and notes that the relevant legal procedures are a necessary part of peace reconciliation.

3. See Doc. 14889 “Situation in Syria: prospects for a political solution?”, Rapporteur: Ms Theodora Bakoyannis (Greece, EPP/CD).

4. See [Resolution 2403 \(2021\)](#) “The situation in Afghanistan: consequences for Europe and the region”, [Resolution 2298 \(2019\)](#) “Situation in Syria: prospects for a political solution?”, and [Resolution 2094 \(2016\)](#) “The situation in Kosovo* and the role of the Council of Europe” (* All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo).

5. The report led to the adoption of [Resolution 2120 \(2016\)](#) “Women in the armed forces: promoting equality, putting an end to gender-based violence” which stresses that “although Europe’s armies have gradually become more receptive to the recruitment of women in recent decades, women are still very much in the minority in military roles, especially among the higher ranks.”

6. See [Resolution 1564 \(2007\)](#) “Prosecution of offences falling within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY)”.

12. Building on this argument, the draft resolution stresses that transitional justice is a precondition for rebuilding societies and attaining justice and closure for victims and welcomes the decision by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to investigate the crimes committed by the Russian Federation in its war of aggression waged against Ukraine, as well as the establishment of a special investigation commission by the United Nations Human Rights Council (paragraph 9).

13. This is consistent with [Resolution 2433 \(2022\)](#) “Consequences of the Russian Federation's continued aggression against Ukraine: role and response of the Council of Europe” adopted during the April 2022 part-session, where the Assembly said that it was “alarmed at the mounting evidence of atrocities committed by Russian armed forces in the context of war of aggression, often targeting the most vulnerable” and reiterated its full support for all efforts aimed at investigating violations by the Russian Federation of international human rights and international humanitarian law and other international crimes, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, and ensuring the accountability of the aggressor.⁷

14. The focus in paragraph 10.3 of the draft resolution on gender-specific collection of testimonies from persons having suffered sexual violence is also consistent with [Resolution 2433 \(2022\)](#) where the Assembly called on Council of Europe member States to support the investigations and proceedings that have been set up by the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice and the Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine set up by the Human Rights Council as well as the work of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine aimed at ensuring accountability for violations of international human rights law, humanitarian law and other international crimes; and to support the gathering of evidence on the ground to be used in investigations, in particular concerning sexual violence, which requires swift and specific action (photographic evidence, DNA conservation, etc.).

5. Importance of quality education for developing peaceful societies

15. In [Resolution 2378 \(2021\)](#) “Strengthening the role of young people in the prevention and resolution of conflicts”, the Assembly stressed the importance of quality education and capacity building, notably with regard to citizenship, conflict transformation and human rights, for developing peaceful societies. Quality education is also important for fostering democratic participation, including in the form of engagement in civil society activities the importance of which are stressed in paragraph 11 of the draft resolution. Therefore, I would like to propose an amendment regarding the inclusion of democratic citizenship and peace education into the formal school curriculum (Amendment E).

7. In [Opinion 300 \(2022\)](#) “Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine”, the Assembly supported all efforts aimed at ensuring that those responsible are held accountable for their actions, including the decision by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to investigate the situation in Ukraine and the establishment of a special investigation commission by the United Nations Human Rights Council.